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LETTER DATED 6 NOVEMBER 1998 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF ERITREA TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

I would like to bring to your attention and that of the Security Council a development of grave concern in the conflict between Eritrea and Ethiopia.

Amid Ethiopian threats of starting an all-out attack against Eritrea, in the words of the Ethiopian Prime Minister "not only to regain territories that belong to us, but also to go on further and teach the Eritrean Government a lesson", the Ethiopian army has intensified in the past week its shelling of Eritrean villages and crop fields, causing civilian deaths and losses of property. In heavy Ethiopian shelling on 30 October 1998 in south-western Eritrea (Badme area), several villages were destroyed, more than 100 crop fields burned, and a farmer and a child instantly killed (more could die from the many wounded). On the same day, in the Senafe area, barrages of Ethiopian shelling similarly destroyed villages, burned crop fields and killed three peasants. There has been retaliation from our forces to stop Ethiopian shelling.

Such intensified Ethiopian attacks coming on the eve of peace talks in Ouagadougou indeed attest to Ethiopia's lip service to a peaceful solution and intention for war. Indeed, continuous intimidation and the threat and use of force by the Ethiopian Government is threatening the peace efforts that are being made.

The Eritrean Government reiterates its commitment to peace and has cooperated and will continue to cooperate in the search for a peaceful and legal solution. It has not and shall not resort to force, but if the constant Ethiopian threats, intimidation and attacks that we are witnessing persist, it will defend itself and will not bear any responsibility for the consequences.

We ask the Security Council to take note of the prevailing situation and call upon it to demand that the Ethiopian Government cease its intimidatory threat of an all-out war and its attacks on Eritrean villages, peasants and their property, and that it commits itself unconditionally and irreversibly to a peaceful solution. We have consistently called for an immediate and unconditional cessation of hostilities with a view to creating an enabling atmosphere in the search for a peaceful process acceptable to both sides. Ethiopia continues to refuse, thus making our respective positions very clear.

We call upon the Security Council to insist on an immediate and unconditional cessation of hostilities and thus enhance the chance for the ongoing efforts of the Organization of African Unity, and other efforts, to succeed.

I should be grateful if you would kindly circulate the present letter as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Haile MENKERIOS
Ambassador
Permanent Representative